

Exhibit No. 6Date 1-24-07Bill No. SB 155

January 24, 2007

Chairman Weinberg, Vice Chairman Moss and Committee Members;

My name is Bea Ann Melichar, I live at 641 Luther Circle, Billings Montana. 406-690-2133. For the past 19 years I have served the elderly and their family members of Yellowstone County as the Executive Director of the Yellowstone County Council on Aging.

16 years ago I spoke for the first time at a hearing on HB-2 about the necessity of financially planning at the State level for the future influx of Seniors across our state. Even at that time the aging services network was attempting to bring awareness to the State Legislature that we will be hit huge with an aging population. Just as people were trying to preplan for their own retirements, we were encouraging the State to preplan for the essential services of this future older population.

Over the years I have been back to inform members of the Legislature about the growing needs for services and therefore the need for additional current and/future funding. The Aging service network has received support some years, but even in the best years, the support did not meet the increased requests for services.

In Yellowstone County in 1980 there were about 13,000 people over the age of 60, by 1990 that had increased to 18,000. By the 2000 census there are over 23,000 people over the age of 60 in Yellowstone County. These figures will continue to rise and with this rise in elderly population will be an increased demand for services such as transportation, Meals on Wheels, and expansion of In- Home Health Care services. Senior Centers that were built in the 1970's will need major repairs and renovations, and commercial kitchen equipment will need to be replaced and there is no funding source for this. We are already facing the fact that services have to be limited, and in some cases waiting lists have been started for basic services. In Yellowstone County we have 43 nursing home and assisted living facilities and we have one full time Ombudsman to check on these facilities and then to mediate between families, residents and facilities staff. How will we cope with these demands into the future? Every single program does fundraising on the local level to provide services for today. How can we hope to provide the essential services in 10 or 20 years? We must be able to make sure that essential services can still be provided in the future.

Today I am requesting that you each play a monumental role in planning for the future of the older population of this state.

Please support and pass SB 155 which will guarantee funding THE FUTURE needs of Older Montanan's.